

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Gardiner Greene Hubbard, January 13, 1876, with transcript

Crawford House, From 85 Court to 15 Brattle Street. Boston, Jan. 13th, 1876. Dear Mr. Hubbard,

(I have just received the fol. telgr. from George Brown :—

“Sail by Russia twenty-sixth. Will be at St. Nicholas Hotel N. Y. on twenty-fifth”.)

The following communication received yesterday from Mr. Bartlett of the Northern Tel. Co.:
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“The Nor. Tel. Co. is leased to the Franklin Co. for \$1000 per. an.

Stock of the Nor. Co. is \$20,9000 — so the Dividends by the aid of a little surplus on hand are 5 per cent.

Lease for 10 years from April 1873” -

Your essay on “The Newspaper Press” was read yesterday to an exceedingly slim but appreciative audience.

I consider it a privilege to have had the opportunity of perusing so valuable and interesting an essay.

Do you remember my “Combining Instruments” — for producing thirty-one distinct signals by means of only five Transmitting Instruments?

Library of Congress

It struck me forcibly in looking over your paper that this was the very apparatus for the London Times if it wishes to set type in many remote places by mechanism operated by telegraph.

What do you think of applying for a Patent upon it? You remember that the law of its action was this.

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If n represent the number of Transmitters that may be used simultaneously upon the same circuit — then the total number of different signals (x) that may be made by various combinations of musical notes is equivalent to the n th power of two minus one. That is $x = 2^n - 1$

So — if ten Transmitters can be worked simultaneously (which can certainly be done) 1023 different signals could be made! — or any one of 1023 electro magnets be operated at will by the currents passing over a single main-line. Of course it is easy to conceive of an arrangement by means of which type could be set — or words & sentences of frequent occurrence set up as wholes by the simple touch of a telegraph-key hundreds of miles away.

Should I prepare a Specification & send in with the working model I have now?

I forwarded to you this morning the Specification I have prepared concerning the Undulatory Current .

Please go over it with Messrs Pollok & Bailey & return it to me as speedily as possible with any suggestions for its improvement.

Can you be in N. Y. on the 25th?

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Is it actually the case that Newspapers can exist in safety — that rely solely upon their Advertisements for all their profits? It seems to me that if the price of a paper does not cover the cost of its production — the measure of its prosperity becomes the 3 measure of its loss ! The larger its circulation the less its profits — and if the circulation is increased indefinitely a point would be reached at which there would be no profit — and beyond which there would be an actual deficit! I suppose however that Newspapers are wise enough to leave a large margin in their estimates of the charges for Advertising to secure them against great & sudden fluctuations in their circulation — and to increase the cost of Advertising as their circulation increases. Still the interests of Advertisers and Proprietors must ever be opposed in the matter of circulation if the cost of production exceeds the price charged for the paper. I am surprised to find from your essay that so large a number of newspapers rely upon advertisements for all their profits.

I suppose that the conflicting interests of Proprietors & Advertisers practically balance each other in the long run — and that each Newspaper has a certain mean circulation at which it can be most profitably run. If the circulation fell short of this the Advertisers would be dissatisfied — & if it exceeded it — the price for Advertising would be so great as to prevent people from doing so.

Your paper has been a most interesting one and I must thank you for having placed it in my hands.

I stayed at Cambridge last night to see that Burglars did not enter your house while Mrs. Hubbard & Berta were absent at the Assembly. Mabel was quite 4 unwell all yesterday — but seems better now. Grace had “a splendid time” skating on Fresh Pond yesterday evening with young Mr. Winlock & another friend.

I occupied myself while awaiting Mrs. Hubbard's return from the Assembly — in copying cut my Specification so that you may see it — & return it in time for me to incorporate alterations & corrections.

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With kind regards Yours respectfully A. Graham Bell. Gardiner G. Hubbard Esq., 711
Fourteenth St., Washington, D. C.